

Washington: The Diplomatic Reports From Moscow

By JAMES RESTON

WASHINGTON, July 6—In his foreign policy review in Chicago this week Secretary of State Rusk said President Johnson was "deeply intent on trying to improve our relations with the Soviet Union," but the diplomatic reports out of Moscow and elsewhere are extremely discouraging on this question.

One reliable report, for example, insists that the Moscow Government has already committed itself to replace half the aircraft and a quarter of the armor lost by the Arab states in the Israeli war, and that already over 100 Soviet planes have been delivered to the United Arab Republic alone.

The Moscow Split

Another indicates that President Podgorny of the U.S.S.R., during his trips to Cairo and Damascus, argued that closer military liaison with the Soviet Union was essential to make effective use of the new Soviet equipment. A third says Soviet military missions have already arrived in Syria and Egypt and that negotiations for Soviet military bases at Alexandria and elsewhere in the Arab world are now taking place.

All this apparently was de-

cided upon in Moscow even before Premier Aleksei Kosygin got back to Moscow with his personal report on the conversations with President Johnson. Thus the Glassboro talks between the two leaders may have raised hopes here of better relations between the two countries and boosted Mr. Johnson's standing in the popularity polls in this country, but there is no evidence of a *détente* on the other side.

There have been quite a few reports since the start of the Middle East crisis of divisions within the Soviet Council of Ministers on Soviet Middle East policy. On the question of avoiding the risk of a direct confrontation with the United States in the war there, and on the question of agreeing to talks between Mr. Kosygin and Mr. Johnson, the "moderates" apparently prevailed.

But there is a great difference between avoiding a big war and reaching a *détente*. Even the so-called "moderates" in the Soviet Council of Ministers seem to favor one more expensive round of the Middle Eastern arms race.

The hope in the Johnson Administration was quite different. Officials here, looking at

the Soviet reverses in Cuba, the Congo, Indonesia, Greece and the Middle East over the past five years, had begun to wonder whether this expensive process of competitive influence-peddling could not be reduced or eliminated and replaced by parallel if not cooperative policies of economic aid in these contested areas.

Expensive Expansion

Indonesia alone cost the Soviet Government over \$1 billion and ended in a ghastly massacre of the Communists and their supporters. In the Middle East, the Soviet Union encouraged if it did not direct the Arab encirclement of Israel and supplied between \$3 billion and \$4 billion of arms to carry it out.

The Johnson Administration never believed that Moscow would leave the balance of power in Israel's favor after the war, but it did hope for cooperation in getting at the causes of war in the Middle East and helping in the settlement of boundaries and refugees.

This is the kind of *détente* Secretary Rusk and President Johnson were hoping for, but the trend of events is not going that way. Leonid Brezhnev, the General Secretary of the Soviet Communist party, while arguing

that the "moderates" were right in limiting the Middle Eastern war, added this week that "the arrogance and perfidy of imperialist reaction necessitate an even greater concern" for the strengthening of the Soviet armed forces. And, if anything, the attacks on U.S. Vietnamese and Middle Eastern policy are becoming more vicious, while the Johnson-Kosygin talks are virtually ignored in the Soviet press.

The Priorities

Thus the battle over priorities in Moscow remains about the same. The officials at the two extremes—those who wanted to take greater risks of war and those who wanted to give first priority to the internal development and modernization of the Soviet state—have lost, and the cold war continues on all fronts.

In fact, Moscow seems to be regarding the weakness of the Arab states as an opportunity to wipe out all Western influence from that part of the world and establish itself as the dominant force over the oil and communications lines of the area. This would not be *détente* but defeat for the West, which may be what Moscow had in mind all along.